THE MOST IMPORTANT CRITICS, ARTISTS, WRITERS AND PRESS MAN WHO HAVE WROTE ON THE ARTISTIC TRIP OF SAMI RAFI

AHMED FOUAD SELIM

ANTWAN JENAWY

BIKAR

GORG EL BAHGOURY

KHAIRY ASAAD

SAFI NAZ KAZEM

SALAH BISAR

EZ EL DIN NAGIB

DR. FAROUK BASUNY

FAOUZEYA MAHRAN

KAMEL ZUHERY

KAMELIA ATRIS

LELIAN KARNOUK

MAY SELIM

DR. MOHAMED AL NASER

MOHAMED HAMZA

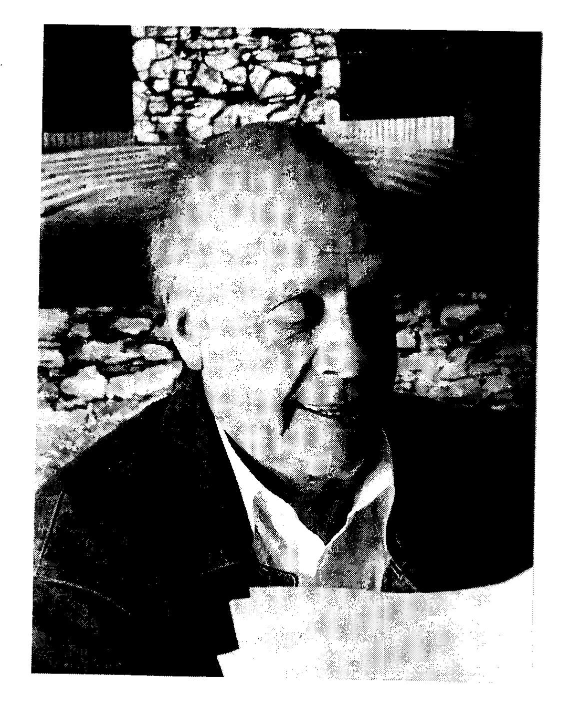
MOKHTAR EL ATTAR

MONIR AMER

NAGWA AL ASHRY

NESMA ATALA

YOUSEF AL KAID



Sami Rafi

Born in Cairo 1931

Professor at the Fine Arts Faculty in Cairo.

Helwan University.

Former, head of the Decor department at the same faculty.

Sertificates:

1956 Diploma of the Fine High Arts Faculty in Cairo.

1957 Diploma of the High Institute for Artistic Education, Cairo.

1966 Diploma of the Fine Arts Faculty in Vienna, theatre department.

1977 Approved as equivalent to the Ph.D. Degree.

Art Studies:

1955 One–month visit to Poland.

1957 One–month visit to Moscow.

1959 Academic scholarship Poland for 6 months, Animation Films.

1962 Study mission in Austria for 5 years, including a full-year in Vienna Opera Hous.

Public Art Exhibitions:

1954 His first participartion in a public exhibition was at the Spring Exhibition of the Fine Arts Faculty Graduates Association.

1955 Warsaw.

1957 Moscow.

1964 Ceramics Symposium, Austria.

1964 The International Ceramics Exhibition, Gemunden- Austria.

1965 The International Ceramics Exhibition, Vienna.

1970 -77 The Public Exhibition- Fine Arts Administration.

1973 Autumn Salon.

1974 American University in Cairo.

1975 Ain Shams University. The tenth Alexandria Biennale. Fine Arts Faculty gallery in Cairo.

1976 Paris. Khartoum. Cagnes- Sur mer. France. Atelier Salon in Cairo.

1977 Lagos.

1979 Roma – Bucharest.

1980 Fine Arts Faculty gallery in Cairo.

1981 Paris.

1985 Saar land – Germany.

1986 International Sports Biennale. Barcelona.

Private Exhibitions:

1966 Stage set-Vienna.

1968 Stage set- Cairo Opera House.

1974 Arabic Calligraphy- Geothe Institute, Cairo.

Prizes:

1955 First prize, Art production competition, Ministry of Education.

1956 First prize in decorative painting Ministry of Education.

1962 First prize, World Peace Declaration UNESCO, Cairo.

1962 First prize, Son et Lumiere poster.

1971 -73 The first prizes, Tourism poster competition, Ministry of Turism.

1973 First prize, Cairo emblem, Jointly with the artist Menasa, Cairo Governorate.

1973 -75 first prizes, for commemoration post stamps, Post Authority.

1975 First prize, memorial of the Unknown Soldier in Cairo-Housing Ministry.

1976 Second Prize for the memorial of the Egyptian Soldier in Ismailia City, Housing Ministry.

1976 First Prize for the emblem of the Housing and Reconstruction Ministry.

1979 Third Prize for the Memorial of the Tenth of Ramadan City, Housing Ministry.

1980 Third Prize for the memorial of Sadat City, Housing Ministry.

1982 First Prize for Al-Azhar emblem on its millennium anniversary.

1991 Third Prize for the memorial of Cairo City Squer in Riad, Housing Ministry.

1998 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2000 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2001 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2002 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2003 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2004 Nominated for Mobarak Prize.

2004 Retrospective exhibition at the Zamalek Art complex, "60 years Art".

Acquistions:

Modern Art Museum in Cairo, Fine Arts Faculty Museum in Cairo, Menia and Alexandria, Cairo Opera House, International Conferences room in Cairo. Private collections in Austria and Germany.

Implemented Works:

The Unknown Soldier memorial in Cairo (1975) 32 meters high, Mural paintings for the second line of Cairo metro includings 19 stations amounting to a total area of 3250 square meters 1993-2001. 40 book covers, 2 books for children, 17 commemoration post stamps, 15 posters, 40 Emblems, 2 commoration silver coins, first, on the occasion of the diamond anniversary of the Fine Arts Faculty in Cairo 1984, the second is on the occasion of crossing the metro under the rive Nile 1999. Stage set for the play "Life of an artist", Cairo Opera House, 1970. Stage set for the Opera "Madame Butterfly" El Gomhoreya theatre, 1981. Stage set for Opera "Aida" El Gomhoreya theatre, 1984. Internal architecture for private and public locations.

The obliek of Ramsis II by the square the main Airport of Cairo City.

Other Activities:

- Member of the directorate of the Atelier Association in Cairo in the seventies.
- Member of the Art Committee for post stamps.
- Member of the directorate of the Plastic Artists Syndicate since it was established in 1978.

- Member of the Artistic High Committee for developing museums- Ministry of Culture.
- Member of the high Committee responsible for the advertisements of Cairo City. Cairo Governorate.
- Member of the Standing scientific committees for recruiting professors and assistant professors, the High Council of Universities.
- Participated in the Committee for developing and changing all Egyptian bank notes on 1980.
- Participated in the Committee for establishing the new Opera House in 1983-1985.
- Supervised and examined 35 Ph. D. and master degree theses in four Fine Arts Faculties.

Participated in Chairing sessions at:

- The conference on "Horizone of the Future", Cairo Opera House, 1992.
- The conference on "Popular Arts and Heritage", Faculty of Physical Education, Alexandria University, 1993.
- The conference on "The arts and the environment" Faculty of Artistic Education, Helwan University, 1994.
- The conference on "Art and Culture" Faculty of Fine Arts, Alexandria University 1995.
- Participated in assessing works for the Incentive State Award for Arts, for many years. The High Council for Culture.

A Million Eyes

If exhibitions are too elitist, why not take to the streets?

George El Bahgory
Artist

Al - Ahram Weekly Newspaper 1/7 /1999

As a student of fine arts in the 50s. Sami Rafi was distinguished by his colassal height. His head, towering over those of all his fellow students, beamed with a perennial smile, which I had to wrench my neck and stand on my toes to glimpse. He had, and still has, that brand of goodness and simplicity that infects you with love and the urge to be closed to him. In my early caricatures, I portrayed him as a palm tree or a cylinder. I sketched him with a long neck and a cylindrical head, a hollow brass cylinder with nothing inside it.

After five lean years of learning how to draw, I gradually came to value what weight and depth this cylindrical head possessed. He was a genuine man, a talented and distinguished artist, a bunch of flowers ovefflowing with love of life and of our colleagues. We specialized in different fields of art: he in architectural decoration, I in charcoal sketches and later oils. I stole moments from my work to keep track of his success, along with that of some other colleagues: Kamal Hammouda or Raof Abdel-Meguid , Ezzat Saqr, Shadi Abdel-Salam (architecture) and Samir el Sabaa.

Another Rafi was our professor at the institute. He was an outstanding plastic artist, regaded by his students as one of the avanguards of modern art. But Sami Rafi an artist to the bone: he was not out to gain his fame from the family name he shared with his brother, Samir, who held frequent exhibitions and represented several schools of art. Samir was one of the most brilliant artists of the '50s. As professor of fine arts, he exhibited his work to a large public, and was classified as a surrealist who embodied the spirit of Egypt. Together with Abdel-Hadi El-Gazzar, Ramses Yunan, El-Seguini, Gazbiya Sirry and Hamed Nada, he had introduced genres which enriched the trend of modern art in contemporary Egypt.

Samir Rafi, the professor, one day invited his brother Sami Rafi, the first-year art student, to the Opera House, . The whole day was spent watching a rehearsal of Moliere's L'Avare, in which Said Abu Bakr played the leading role. Sami was fascinated with the set, and the brilliant contribution it made to the play. He had already made up his mind to choose set design as his field of specialisation and, after years of work, he was chosen by Rashad Rushdi for a scholarship in Vienna. Years late Sami returned with a new love, and the qualifications needed to manage the set department at the Opera, a post he held until the Opera House was consumed by fire one sad day in 1971.

After the fire, Sami reverted to his former teaching job at the Faculty of Fine Arts, where he still teaches today. His creativity and his great love for his compatriots meant he was always on the look out for opportunities to close the gap between the people and the plastic arts, to end the alienation of those outside the exhibition. He knew that most of the public at art exhibitions is made up of the artist's relatives and close friends. He set to work: his mission was to eradicate "optic illiteracy".

To communicate his art to the masses, he chose calligraphy. Names, phrases, proverbs. Quranic verses written on walls, on the porticos of houses, the facades of cafés or shops, which normally catch the public eye, became vessels to carry his innovative art. Freely displayed on the street. In a competition held to choose a work immortalizing the unknown solider. He created an artistic composition within a pyramidal structure. The idea of

drawing on national legacy had been inspired to him by a monument he had seen in Baghdad, erected in the days of the Iraqi revolution. The idea had remained latent for decades. The monument depicted Mesopotamia. the land between the two great rivers, linked by a series of arcs depicting Iraq's historical epochs.

Spontaneity, then, is the secret of his success. His great pyramid immortalizing the unknown solider in the shrine at Madinet Nasr, came about almost by accident. His more recent artistic achievement in the Cairo Metro stations was no less the work of chance. In addition to the numerous stamps he has designed for various official occasions, his two great works embody all the features of his art. Fate is often on his side. Prompted by a profound admiration of the monument to the unknown solider, Farouk El-Gohari, professor of architecture at Ain Shams University and consultant to the Cairo Underground Authority, set out to find him and immediately commissioned him with the decoration of Cairo's 18 new underground stations.

His art unravelled a new world of aesthetic pleasures. His face is so expressive, his laugh contagious: his acrobatic movements and clown-like gestures could kill you with laughter. This is just the way he wants it: to the dregs. His wife, the novelist Zeinab Sadeq, is the love of his life. She whispers instead of speaking, moves lightly as a dove, breathes freedom of expression and possesses a profound knowledge of literature. Her qualities have brought the best in him to fiuition He cracks jokes and invites others to join in but his tone is caustic. His head, hairless as an egg grows shinici every year. On the periphery of his head, the hair is left to grow freely, losing its lustie as it turns to grey. then white.

He is an artist to the tips of his fingers. Art runs in his veins and beats with his heart. Art is within him: it has never been an occupation or business. His secret is deeply couched within himself, manifesting itself in moments of creation. He does not think such moments are historical or eternal.

The brilliant colours and graceful lines may escape the passengers racing to get to work or school: at first, they may not so much as glance even one at the walls. The underground is simply a modern, fast, comfortable and reasonably priced means of transportation. Habitual commuters, however, must look around, and eventually establish a degree of intimacy - familiarity, even -with the art covering the walls around them.

The metro stations may be their first encounter with the world of art, and new aesthetic pleasures may thus unfold, for the first time, before their gaze. A little beauty in a crowded, chaotic life must do some good: eyes that discover a whole new world of pleasure and beauty must be more rested, somehow.

The student of fine arts I encountered in his 20s. has indeed accomplished the goal his brother foresaw, the day he gave him the ticket to the Opera. His brother had told him that day: "Do not be anxious about whether or not people see art: here at the Opera, they perceive the painting along with the play. Today, on the new metro lines, art is reaching out to the people. Millions of travellers every day can see colourful paintings and ingenious compositions. These works are all signed Sami Rafi.

LA CALLIGRAPHIE ARABE CONSIDEREE COMME FORME D'EXPRESSION DANS LA PEINTURE DE SAMI RÁFI

Antoine Gennaoui
Art critic

Le Journal D'egypte 6 / 4 /1974

A l'Institut Goethe du Caire vient de s'ouvrir une importante exposition des peintures de Sami Rafi. L'intérét de ces oeuvres consiste dans leur presentation du contexte et du sens de la parole arabe en ditferentes compositions comportant de belles variantes stylisees des lettres calligraphiques que forment cette parole.

Sami Rafi traite ainsi 25 des 99 qualificatifs attache's au nom de Dieu dans le Coran, tels que le Juste. Ie Sage, Ie Fort, Ie Roi des rois etc. II en fait de belles peintures meditees, penetrees de poesie et de mystere, sur un style calligraphique temoignant d'une plasticite toute orientale et élaboree en de larges touches de couleurs lumineuses d'une grande harmonie et d'un profond ecalt.

Ainsi done par ses formes renouvelees, Sami Rafi aboutit a une evidence d'expression dont la beauté simple et déponillée rejoint l'abstraction en peinture. L'Art avec lui remonte á ses origines et devient un langage qui soumet le dessin, Ia ligne, les couleurs au contexte de Ia parole. Son pouvoir de séduction s'adresse de ce fait mieux a toutes les parties de I'étre, au coeur et a I'instinet aussi bien qu'a l'esprit

En utilisant ainsi en peinture les signes des caractéres arabes comme d'une syntaxe infiniment personnalisee, Sami Rafi fait un effort tres valable dans Ie sens de l'utilisation d'un vocabulaire maitrisé et surgit du plus profond de Ia race, pour deboucher dans le langage universel des formes dans les arts plastiques.

WIENER AUSSTELLUNGEN

Wiener Zeitung. 15.12.1966. Austria.

Wie ein ägyptischer Bühnenblidner Mozarts "Zauberflöte",Beethovens "Fidelio", Shakespeares "Macbeth" oder Nestroys "Unbedeutenden" bildkunstlerisch interpretiert, zeigt eine sehr interessante Ausstellung in der Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei. Sami Rafi, 1931 in Kairo geboren, Absolvent der dortigen Kunstakademie, Träger zahlreicher erster Preise, hat heuer sein Diplom für Buhnenbidnerei an der Akademie der bildenden Kunste in Wein erworben und arbeitet derzeit in den Ateliers der Staatsoper. Sucht man "Ägyptisches" bei ihm, findet man es vielleicht noch am ehesten in der wuchtenden Balkenkonstrucktion zum "Macbeth", ansonsten besitzen seine Entwurfe internationales Gepräge. Er setzt die Mittel der abstrakten Malerei sehr erfolgreich als Stimulans fur Atmosphäre ein. Mozarts Musik wird Farbe, der Feuer und Wasserzauber in riesige kristalline Blöcke eingefangen. Der weitestgehende Verzicht auf Requisiten gibt der Bühne Weite und damit Raun für das dramatische Gesehehen, Einige Andeutungen auf gemalten Prospekten genugen selbst für Nestroy. Sami Rafi Liefert damit einen echten Diskussionsbeitrag zum Thema Modernes Theater.

Liliane Karnouk
Artist and art critic

Contemporary Egyptian Art. The American University In Cairo- 1995

It is within this tradition of calligraphy as a source of inspiration that Sami Rafi conceived his Monument to the Unknown Soldier, in Nasr City in Cairo. This monument is the only large-scale one erected in the 1970s. The simple forms of the Kufic script are matched with the open, right-angle pyramidal structure through a simple and effective design. It is based on the solid thrust of four diagonal wings, meeting at the top. The pyramid structure forms underneath it a sheltered space in the form of a smaller pyramid or a soldier's tent. Ceremonies held in that area are dramatically emphasized by the sharp natural lighting coming through the wings. These are inscribed, as ancient monuments were, with the names of those immortalized: here, one composite name representing the unknown soldiers. Seventy-one names, picked at random, were assembled in juxtaposition to form a single continuous word, which shields the monument like a casing.

The composite collective name in the monument, achieved through the patterning of the Kufic script, can be contrasted with Rafi's other calligraphic works. In an exhibition held in 1974 entitled the Names of Allah, the artist dealt with calligraphy very freely, each word treated like a figurative statement. The choice of canvas as a ground with a confined space liberates the singular name. By contrast to uniformity in the design of the monument, each attributive in painting is treated as a sort of unique conceptual image, a'wordscape'. The fact that the individual meaning of each word calls for absolutely different compositions while all of the names and canvases express a unique principle is consciously Islamic.

A designer by training, Rafi's experimentation with calligraphy can be praised for his insightful sense of spatial and environmental relationships, and for his instinctively appropriate choice of medium. He minimalized and purified the language of forms to attune it to the forms of the language.

DANS LES SALONS DE L'OPERA DU CAIRE
DECORS DE THEATRE DE SAMI RAFI

Antoine Gennaoui
art critic

Le Journal D'egypte. 8 / 5 /1968

L'organisation du cadre scénique, Ia réalisation des éclairages le choix et les couleurs des costumes, bref, toutes les préoccupations plastiques de Ia réalisation d'une oeuvre de théâtre, font l'objet d'une belle exposition où Sami Rafi preséntе les maquettes de ses decors, dans les salons de lopéra du Caire. Diplomé de l'Academie des Beaux-Arts d'Autriche, cet artiste est actuellement decorateur a notre théatre national, aprés avoir passé plus d'un an de stage a' l'opéra de Vienne.

Je suis toujours saisi de scrupules quand il s'agit d'évaluer les maquettes des décors. Telle esquisse qui parait prestigieuse, peut donner une fois realisée, un décor insatisfaisant. Par contre, telle autre peu séduisante, peut quand elle est exécutée, devenir un chef-d'oeuvre.

C'est que souvent certaines maquettes présentent le danger d'être un peu trop théoriques et de ne pas trop serrer de près Ia realite' de Ia scéne.

En ce qui concerne les oeuvres exposées de Sami Rafi, on ne saurait deceler un style unique. Tout au plus pourraisje dégager trois tendances qui évoluent entre les principaux poles de la décoration moderne stylisée: l'architecture, le réalisme comportant un certain lyrisme, et le constructivisme tout de fantaisie.

Sami Rafi a créé pour "Macbeth" de Shakespeare une architecture imposante pleine de cet irréel qui suggère bien le mystère. On admire aussi ses belles constructions sobres dans "Fidelio" de Beethoven.

Il nous présente également "La Flûte Enchantée" de Mozart dans un décor tout de romantisme, "Falstaff' de Verdi, dans une fantaisie médiévale, "Léonce et Léna" de Buchner dans une poésie fine et délicate. "l'Inconnu" de Nestroy a' travers un beau lyrisme, et "La Censaie" de Tchekov dans un realisme tout de véhémente maîtrise.

Enfin Sami Rafi présente le ballet "L'Oiseau de Feu" de Stravinsky, et l'opéra "Le Pauvre Matelot" de Cocteau en un beau rythme fantasque, qui remplit bien tout l'espace scénique.

Cette exposition de décors nous permet de constater comment le théâtre intelligemment compris est un point de départ pour les recherches de tous ordres et un instrument culturel efficace.

A LESSON IN ELOQUENCE

Beakar
Artist and art critic

1 -El- akhbar Newspaper 14/ 3 /1975.
2-Book From Achbar Al Yom - 1999.

I had the honor of being selected to participate as a member in a committee to survey the projects for a monument about October war to be put up in "Liberty Garden" to represent the Unknown Soldier. I was also a member of the committee that decides on the winning project.

At the beginning it was suggested that the competition would he open to sculptors only because the monument depends on sculpture and statues. I disagreed with that concept and insisted that the competition should be open to architects, plastic artists and designers in various specialties. The aim was to design a shape that symbolizes the most important victory in our history. Such a shape could be a statue, an architectural design or other concrete forms that symbolize the glorious event. This may be more effective than a complicated composition of shapes, statues and other objects.

At last this suggestion was adopted. Seventy-five architects, designers and sculptors entered the competition... It was surprising that the wanner was an artist specialized in design not sculpture, named Sami Rafi, professor of Decor at the Faculty of Fine Arts. This was proof positive that opening the competition to all artists was a wise suggestion,otherwise we could have missed the great project that realized the objectives of the competition.

I have had many experiences in evaluating committees. Yet I must admit that this experience was entirely different. The responsibility scared me. It was a very serious responsibility and could not be compared with those in other competitions.

I confess that the first impression I had, after surveying all the projects, made me feel strongly attached to Sami Rafi's. I believe that the other committee members shared the same feelings. I told myself that such feelings may be fleeting and temporary, the impact of the unusual and unfamiliar. Again I began surveying the other projects once more to free myself from the first impression I had. Every time I did it I turned again to Sami Rafi's project feeling more strongly and deeply about its worth. There is something in that project that invites the viewer to think and ponder. Many high artistic values, beautiful formations and intelligent designs combine originality and heritage and relate the most glorious victory in one concentrated word.

I started to reflect on this project. The whole shape is overly simplistic- a big pyramid shape, hollowed, white in color with straight sides pointing to the center. The huge base rests on a green lawn symbolizing our land that created many civilizations. The sides of the pyramid have names in Kufi calligraphy engraved on them symbolizing the names of martyrs of the war belong to different governerates: the Munufi, Tantawi... etc. In the center of the base rests a cubic shape as high as a man, made of black shiny granite stone, housing an eternal flame that represents faith built on solidarity and persistence.

The idea is a hundred percent Egyptian, original not imported or adopted. It is very simple and very eloquent. It combines our pharoanic and Islamic heritage in the pyramid shape and the Kufi calligraphy respectively. Thus the artist has merged all history into one integrated masking vision. It makes it lighter and transparent without affecting its glory. Bulk and grace are properly combined. Coloring the pyramid in white, the color of victory, and the torch base in black, the color of martyrdom, all in a lush green background produce a harmonious symphony adding color symbolism to design and structure symbolism.

SAMI RAFI CO-PIONEER OF EGYPT'S MODERN ART

By Ahmed Fouad Selim

(Al-Wafd Newspaper, 11/7/2002)

Sami Rafi has achieved eminence as the artist who created monumental works and murals. Likewise, Rafi is widely acclaimed for his impressive designs for posters and commemorative stamps. Moreover, he has been a professor of design and décor for more than 40 years. Rafi is the young brother of great artist Samir Rafi (b.1926), who went to Paris in late 1950s. The elder brother was a key member of Egyptian Contemporary Art Group, which was launched in 1946 by late pioneering artist Hussein Youssef Amin (1904-1984). The group's manifesto aroused the curiosity of artists Hamed Nada, Abdel-Hadi al-Gazar, Ahmed Maher Rea'ef, Ibrahim Maasouda and Mohammed Khalil.

Samir was an enthusiastic member, who co-pioneered modern art movement in Egypt, which sought to dismantle traditional restrictions and draw new features of the Egyptian Identity. Likewise, the younger brother was a rebellious artist. He abandoned traditional mediums and substances, inviting his colleagues to experiment with extraordinary styles and techniques. Fortunately, the rare collection of artworks of the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art includes one of the younger brother's work, which was the product of his new art. "Reclining Woman", produced in 1958, does not display a woman; nor does it illustrate a reclining position. Rather, the work represents and adventurous style boldness and an extraordinary composition. Rafi (the younger brother) glued a strong rough cloth made of jute and glassy sand to a surface of protruding spots. At this moment, Rafi was the first Egyptian artist who replaced brushes with extraordinary materials. It is probable that Rafi outpaced late preeminent artist Munir Kanaan in this field. In late 1960s and early 1970s Rafi shifted his interest to Arabic calligraphy. Again, his experiments were unprecedented. Unlike artists such as Omar al-Nagdy and Fathi Gouda, Rafi did not show enthusiasm to the aesthetic values or decorative aspects of the Arabic calligraphy. Nor did he follow the example of artist Ramzy Mostafa and late artist Youssef Sida, who unfolded their styles in mid 1960s. Mostafa appeared to have drawn much of his inspiration from Islamic manuscripts; late artist Sida was greatly interested in abstract aesthetic of Arabic text. On the other hand, Rafi devoted his individual experiments to highlight, optically and phonetically, values of Arabic alphabet. He centered his interest in this regard on the holy names of God. The perfect example of his success is his painting "Al-Wahid" (the One and Only God) in 1972. He elegantly overstated *Alef* (the first Arabic letter) in such a way as to persuade the viewer (the reader) to use the legato style of music to reach the high pitch.

There is hardly any doubt that Rafi's achievements in this unprecedented field has definitely thrown much light on the fluidity, unique phonetics and tonality of the Arabic alphabet. He also successfully underlined the fact that the Arabic alphabet is a medium of pictorial morphology and sound-bearing characters. Unlike Latin, which largely depends on prefixes and suffixes to stress or contradict the meaning, Arabic alphabet is self-motivated. A wealth of sound-bearing diacritics can also successfully and conveniently replace Arabic letters.

In 1975 Rafi unfolded his monumental sculpture, the War Veterans Memorial, which rises majestically in Nasr City in Cairo. The 32-metre high pyramid-like sculpture is the largest ever achieved by an Egyptian artist. The sides of the majestic sculpture are adorned with names of 71 martyrs, in the style of geometric shapes, *kufi and naskh* writing patterns of Arabic text. Large-scale openings in the three sides act as windows flung open on the world.

Unlike Giza's pyramids, which keep secrets stored safely inside, Rafi's pyramid-like sculpture displays no secrets as it acts as the manifestation of life and death on the one hand and immortality on the other.

A few days ago, Sami Rafi invited me to his exhibition at the Faculty of Fine Art. Appreciating my curiosity over his years-long absence from art movement in Egypt, he said: "The exhibition displays a collection of drawings and paintings, no more no less." He admitted that public areas and Cairo Underground had distracted his attention away from art galleries. It is known that Metro stations in Greater Cairo display terrifically Rafi's illustrations and drawings.

As we said our goodbye and left, my mind was preoccupied by Rafi's rare artwork in the Museum of Egyptian Modern Art. "Reclining Woman" is by all means a forerunner of modernity in Egypt.

STADTVERKEHR
Fachzeitschrift 2/05

Freiburg. Germany

Metrolinie 2

Die ursprüngliche Route der Linie 2 gemäss der Studie von 1973 verlief von El Mazallat im Norden bis Cairo University im Sudwesten über 13,5km. Wahrend der Vertragsphase wurde diese Grundstrecke im Norden um 2,5km bis Shubra el Kheima sowie im Süden um 3km bis Um el Mesrien (Stellenweise auch als Giza Suburban bezeichnet) erweitert. Im Gegenssatz zur Linie 1 wurde die Linie 2 völlig neu errichtet und ist betrieblich absolut eigenständig.

Der Bau began am 12. Juni 1993, in vier Stufen wurde die Linie bei voller Einhaltung der Bauablaufplanung eröffnet:

- 1. Oktober 1996: Shubra el Kheima-Mubarak (8km).
- September 1997: Mubarak-Sadat (3km).
- 19. April 1999: Sadat-Cairo University (5,5km).
- 8. Oktober 2000: Cairo University-Um el Mesrien (2,7km).

Nachträglich beschloss man eine anschliessende funfte Baustufe über 2,6km von Um el Mesrien bis El Monieb mit zwei Stationen und Baukosten von 350 Mio EGP, welche unlangst am 17. Januar 2005 eröffnet wurde. Die Linie 2 ist damit heute knapp 22km lang, davon 11,3km unterirdisch. Von den insgesamt 20 stationen liegen zwolf unterirdisch, sechs ebenerdig und zwei in Viaduktlage.

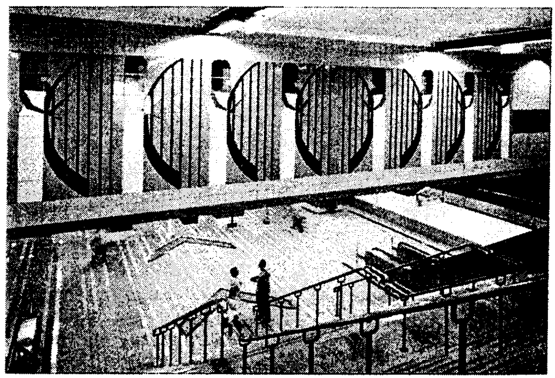
Im zentralen Abschnitt zwischen El Behous und El Mazallat verläuft die Strecke unterirdisch. 1740m liegen in offen gebauten Tunneln, das Gros der Trasse führt dagegen durch einen gebohrten zweigleisigen Röhrentunnel mit insgesamt 9390m Länge und einem inneren Durchmesser von 8,35m. Der minimale Kurvenradius beträgt 201m. Im Verlauf der Bauphasen konnte die durchschnittliche Bauleistung erheblich gesteigert warden, lag sie in Phase 1 noch zwischen 148 und 360m pro Monat, so wurden später biz zu 605m pro Monat (Abschnitt Gezira-Sadat) erreicht. Das Tunnellängsprofil ist derart ausgestaltet, dass die Stationen fahrdynamisch günstig hoher als die Streckentunnel liegen. Im Zuge der Linie 2 findet sich der erste jemals gebaute Niltunnel, welcher unter zwei parallelen Flussarmen hindurchführt und dessen Sohle etwa 30m unter Geländeoberkante liegt. Auf der Nilinsel zwischen den Flussarmen gibt es den U-Bahnhof Gezira (Opera).

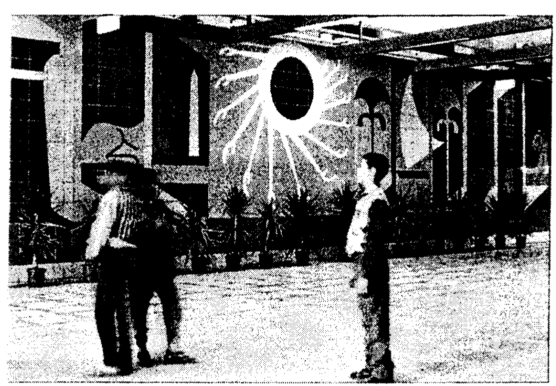
Die nördlich anschliessende Aussenstrecke führt über einen Viaduktabschnitt mit der Station Kolleyet el Zeraa und endet ebenerdig neben dem Bahnhof Shubra el Kheima. Dort befindet sich auch der Betriebshof. Im Südwesten läuft die Metro inclusive der

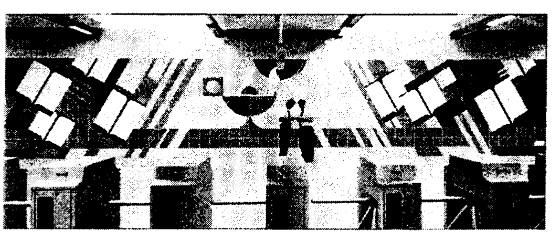
Streckenergänzung nach El Monieb parallel zur zweigleisigen Niltaleisenbahnstrecke nach Oberägypten in Niveaulage mit zwei Verknüpfungsstationen zur Eisenbahn. Mangels ausreichender Platzverhaltnisse musste die Metro im Bahnhofsbereich Giza, wo auch Fernzüge halten, per Viadukt mitsamt Station über die Bahnanlagen platziert werden. Beide Endstationen sind dreigleisig. Im Tunnel kamen Vignolschienen mit Zweiblock-Betonschwellen auf Fester Fahrbahn Zum Einbau. Auf den oberirdischen Strecken liegt Schottergleis.

Die U-Bahnhöfe wurden in offener Bauweise errichtet und haben damit samtlich Rechteckprofil. Um volle Wasserdichtigkeit zu gewährleisten, bestehen die Aussenwände der Stationskasten aus 1 bis 2m dickem Spezialbeton. Wie auch an den oberirdischen Zwischenstationen gibt es ausschliesslich Seitenbahnsteige mit 144m Länge. Die Bahnhöfe liegen in Tiefen von 15 bis 23m. Sadat und Mubarak bieten Ubergang zur Linie 1, welche an beiden Stellen rechtwinklig unterfahren wird. Hervorzuheben sind direkte Verbindungswege zwischen den Bahnsteigen in allen Relationen. Gegenüber der Linie 1 wurde der Gestaltung der Stationen grösseres Augemerk geschenkt. Zwar sind die Bahnhöfe ihrer architektonischen Grundkonzeption nach mit je einem Zwischengeschoss und einstöckiger

Bahnsteigebene identisch und sehr konventionell gebaut, doch weist jede Station einen eigenständigen Innenausbau


Station Gezira (Opera), Verbindung vom Eingangsbereich ins Zwischengeschoss, Gestaltungsmotiv: die durch diese Station erschlossene Oper


Station Um el Mesrien (Giza Suburban), Schalterhalle


Station Cairo University, Schalterhalle mit Sperrensystem, Gestaltungsmotiv: Universität


Station Masarra, Bahnsteigebene Aufnahmen dieser Seite (4): Dr. Sami Rafi

mit Keramikplatten auf, welcher mittels eines bestimmenden Gestaltungsthemas auf die Umgebung Bezug nimmt. Fur dieses sehr gelungene ästhetische Design zeichnet der ägyptische Kunstprofessor Dr. Sami Rafî verantwortlich. Die Gestaltung hat auch praktische Zwecke, soll sie doch auch Analphabeten die Erkennung der Haltestellen erleichtern. Mit vier Ausnahmen sind die Bahnhofe stufenfrei per Aufzug zugänglich, Zwischenebene und Bahnsteige sind bei den unterirdischen Anlagen in beiden Richtungen mit Rolltreppen verbunden. Alstom lieferte dafur 156 Fahrtreppen und 47 Aufzüge.

Die Streckenkapazitat der Linie 2 liegt bei 60.000 Personen pro Stunde und Richtung bzw. 1.850.000 Personen pro Tag, die Höchstgeschwindigkeit bei 80km/h und die kürzeste mögliche Zugfolge bei 1,75 Minuten. Im ersten Betriebsjahr zählte man auf der eröffneten Teilstrecke 66 Millionen Nutzer. Derzeit (Mai 2004) warden 1,2 Mio Fahrgäste pro Tag mit Zugfolgen bis hinunter zum Dreiminutentakt befördert. Die Betriebszeiten erstrecken sich zwischen 5 und 0.15 Uhr. Fur die Gesamtstrecke benötigen die Züge 30 Minuten Fahrzeit.

Finanziert wurde die Linie 2 weitgehend aus Eigenmitteln des ägyptischen Staates. Der Gesamtaufwand lag bei rund 2 Mrd USD.

A NEW TYPE OF ARTIST

By Mokhtar El Attar

Artist And Art Critic

1- El/ Mossawar magazine 15/8/1997
2- Book Authority. 1998

The idea of beautifying a place comes to mind when we talk about the art of décor. Obviously man is the only living creature passionately keen to change his environment and turn his shelter into an appealing, comfortable home. According to one concept, décor is connected to the art of arrangement, the art of beautification or the art of decoration; it is an artistic task, which seeks to link lifestyle with environment. Perhaps, décor is the only art through which an interaction develops between aesthetic values and utility. Furthermore, décor is an art, which brings together drawing, colouration, decoration, sculpture and architecture. Décor brings about material gain on the one hand and a panorama of sensations and emotions on the other. Therefore, the décor designer is a gifted and cultured person with a sound mind and good expereicne. He is a painter, an architect, a sculptor and a skilled craftsman. Stage setting, cinema, commercial activities and homes etc are illustrative of the art of décor.

Being a gift artist employing a sophisticated concept, Sami Rafi produces works which brilliantly crystalised these concepts.

His rare talent and works of genius constantly invite in-depth analysis and assessment. For example, the Mausoleum of the Unknown Soldier, which rises 32 metres above Nase City is nothing less than a Fourth Pyramid in Cairo. Sami Rafi's artistic credibility and appeal were deepened by his works of art which ornament the stations of the second-line of Cairo's Underground. These giant work of art, recreate the peculiar features of the Egyptian environment and the specific character of the area of each station. Sami Rafi was given the opportunity to unveil his unique mode of artistic technique and philosophy when he won a national competition to ornament the stations of the Cairo's Underground. He brilliantly used ceramics to produces his appealing and artistic models. Equipped with the fertile imagination of a thinker, the artistic genius of a craftsman and the great sensitivity of an artist Sami Rafi successfully embodies his ideas and thoughts in reality. Like a musician, a poet, or a man-of-letters, Sami Rafi, obsessed by his sophisticated and peculiar mode of artistic philosophy has resisted the temptations of personal gain or financial return and extensively employs his talent, knowledge, experience and sound mind to establish an art school which appeals to the masses.

There is hardly little doubt that Sami Rafi's impressive creativity and commitment to the social code of morality did not materialize overnight. Psychoanalysts attribute successful creativity to childhood and the social surroundings and environment, in which the gifted child grows. They also strongly uphold theories asserting that the gifted person's education and the type of school he is sent to play a good part in honing his artistic skill and stimulating his creative mind. They lament that so many young talents have missed their way in life because they had no fertile soil.

Rafi was born in the Cairo district of Al-Sakakini in 1931. The young child opened

his eyes on a family home rich with the atmosphere of knowledge and culture. His father Mr. Rafi Mohammed Rafi, a member of the legal community in Egypt, had an extensive personal library with titles covering various sciences and arts. Young Rafi, the third of four brothers, was obsessed with music; but he did not have a teacher of music around to encourage him. The eldest brother, Samir, was a member of a vanguard movement led by eminent artist-thinker Hussein Youssef Amin (1904-1984) to modernize artistic trends. The curious child, quietly and attentively, would watch his brother while he was drawing, mixing pigments, reading or listening to great pieces of music. He was also keen to keep close to his brother when the latter received his friends who later became pioneers of the arts in Egypt.

Islamic antiquities lying along the road extending from Bab al-Fetouh (the Gate of Victories) to his El-Selhedar primary school widened his imagination and knowledge.

Being a member of his school's Group of Drawing and Handicrafts the child's talent and creativity drew the attention of his teachers. They enthusiastically commissioned him to prepare and organize works of art to mark social and national festivals.

The child ultimately realized the real meaning of fine art and that a good art appealing to society's rank and file is invaluable. His unprecedented contribution to the Egyptian art movement first materialized when he created works depicting landscapes and daily life. Trained in using carpentry tools the boy was well experienced in making handicrafts. It seems that he was pre-destined to be a successful designer of décor when he grew up. During his time at a technical secondary school be spent a whole year in the school's well-equipped workshop. When the then Ministry of Education decided to abolish the technical curriculum in secondary schools Rafi was compelled to join a traditional secondary school. However, at the end to the school day Rafi would rush home to secretly spend a good deal of time in a studio that his eldest brother had arranged in a corner of the family home. He would stand in front of the mirror there and use his brother's brushes and pigments to make self portraits. He was caught off guard one day. He expected that his brother would scold him. But to his great relief Samir praised his talent and encouraged him to proceed with drawing. Moreover, Samir introduced the amateur artist to his friends who were members of the association of Egyptian Contemporary Art. They included Abdel-Hadi Al-Gazar (1925-1966), Hamed Nada (1924-1990) and Ibranim Masoudah, a Jewish artist who left Egypt in 1948.

After completing his secondary school deducation Rafi joined the Faculty of Fine Art. He was one of the 20 top students in the faculty's 50-student aptitude test. Rafi decided to pursue his study of art in the décor department, which, he maintained, has strong connections with the masses and is a reflection of all the other modes of fine art. His enthusiasm to study the art of décor was further aroused when his eyes fell on the impressive stage settings of world famous operas, which combine a striking harmony of music, choreography, theme and costumes. During his studies in the Faculty of Fine Art Rafi was keen to exhibit his oil paintings in the annual spring exhibitions organized by the faculty's alumna.

Upon his graduation in 1956 he did one-year postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Art Education before he was appointed a demonstrator. In 1961 the Opera House in Egypt sponsored his scholarship to Austria to study stage management. Rafi beat four artists in a competition to with the five-year scholarship. During his stay in Austria he gained first hand experience

from skilled instructors and experts who included the stage director of the Vienna Opera House. In appreciation of Rafi's diligence and eagerness to learn the director of the Vienna Opera House selected him as his assistant for one year before the artist returned to Cairo in 1968. the officials of Cairo Opera House (the former elegant classic opera building established by Khedive Ismail Pasha in 1869 to mark festivities staged to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal), sought to make use of his experience. The first task he accomplished was the design and execution of the stage setting and decoration of Leningrad Ballet. Rafi's achievements increased the following year when he, in collaboration with an Austrian stage director, designed the stage settings and decorations of the operetta Merry Years.

Three months later, in October 1971, a big fire engulfed the Cairo Opera House. The opera's activities were shifted to Al-Gomhuria Theatre, which was very narrow and not suited to proper set designs. Rafi eventually joined the teaching staff at the Faculty of Fine Art in Cairo in 1977. throughout six years, which preceded his appointment, Rafi realized the great dream of his life: the Mausoleum of the Unknown Soldier, which overlooks the military parade ground in Cairo's district of Nasr City. The mausoleum in a pyramid-like, towering structure, the height of a 10-storey building.

This brilliant idea had occurred to Rafi long before the Egyptian government at the time announced a national competition in 1974 to design a mausoleum for the unknown soldier. The ideal of his pyramid-like gaint mausoleum came to him while he was watching a television programme. He was driven by the strong beliefs of ancient Egyptians that the pyramid represents a tomb of eternity.

Rafi unveiled his latest achievements in the stations of Cairo Underground's second-line, which extends from qaliub province, north of Greater Cairo, to Ramses Square and Al-Tahrir Square, Downtown. The line also dives under the Nile to reach its terminal in Al-Monib district to the south of Giza province. Using ceramics he designed impressive referent-like murals, by the help of which commuters can identify the peculiar character and features of the station's district. Apparently unaware of the necessity that the decoration of Cairo Underground's stations should reflect the surrounding environment on the surface, Rafi's competitiors produced suggestions which were mediocre, superficial and commercialized.

Rafi admitted that he had been impressed by the elegant design and decoration of Moscow's Underground. He emphasized that he was keen to turn the Cairo's Underground stations into signs and referents which could help illiterate commuters easily identify their destinations. For example, Rafi turned Shoubra al-Khima station into a panorama of signs and representations of Alexandria, the Delta area and the Graeco antiquity. He acknowledged the collaboration of the Egyptian engineering office, which implemented the project's architectural structure. He said that the office had provided him with key information about the environment of each station.

Rafi produced designs which brilliantly brough about a harmony between modernity and classicism. His success in this respect is the fruit of long years of diverse experiences and diligence. He is also an avid reader of books on many subjects.

It is wonderful to examine the artist's achievements over the past 40 years. Each of these enormous and classic works of genius warrant a special focus of study and analysis. His talent has been acknowledged by several prizes won in domestic competitions.

Among the sophisticated designs the unveiled on the stage of Al-Gomhuria Theatre were stage settings for the two operas Mme Butterfly and Opera Aida. Rafi's impressive achievements also include more than 40 logos and book covers. From 1970 to 1973 he initiated an innovative artistic experience when he produced a brilliantly expressive style of Arabic calligraphy for God's holy names. His style of Arabic calligraphy was used to highlight names selected randomly to adorn the structure of the Mausoleum of the Unknown Soldier. Meantime, his works exhibited in one-man or group exhibitions reinforce the belief that Raif is a master of the art of collage and abstract expressionism. Rafi is also one of the few artists who initiated a technique bringing together abstract and organic elements. This technique has attracted the attention of many Egyptian artists in recent years.

Upon his return to Egypt in 1968 Rafi organized a solo exhibition at the hall of the ill-fated Cairo Opera House. The works highlighted the artist's designs for stage settings for Shakespeare's Macbeth and Mozart's Magic Fluite. These works established Rafi among artists who successfully employ abstract forms in their expressive works.

Rafi has also designed 17 commemorative stamps. He has also illustrated two children's books published by Dar el Maaref Press Establishment, in addition to 15 posters promoting tourism in Egypt, international fairs etc. He was also assigned, in 1983, to design a commemorative silver coin marking the 75th anniversary of the opening of the Faculty of Fine Art in Cairo. In 1999 he designed a commemorative silver coin marking the passage of Cairo's Underground under the Nile.

Rafi is a versatile artist. He has his own peculiar philosophy and aesthetic values. For example, he dismisses as anachronistic the idea of adorning walls with photographs or paintings. He explains that the need to satiate man's spiritual thirst arose in Europe during the Renaissance era in the 14th century. The same trend was exported to Egypt during the French expedition in 1798. Rafi has a strong belief that the aesthetic values and appeal of a painting adorning a wall can be aroused by patterns and colours ornamenting carpets, ceramics, murals, ceilings, tiled floors, pieces of furniture, or textiles. Evidently he upholds the ideas and arguments stated by Hungarianborn French Victor Vazarelli (1908-) in the Science and Society Journal.

LE DECORATEUR DU PEUPLE

May Sélim

Al- Ahram Hebdo 25/6/2003.

L A TOUJOURS l'air affable même durant cette période d'examens et de travail exténuant á la faculté de beaux-arts, où il enseigne. Le professeur d'art décoratif et de design, Sami Rafi, est parfaitement à l'aise dans son tee-shirt jaune et son pantalon beige. Il sourit au photographe et fait part de son amour pour la photographie, dressant les avantages de sa caméra Hasselblade avec laquelle il capte toutes ses créations.

La salle de séjour.

Sur les murs, sont accrochées ses peintures qui datent des années 1950. Des couleurs criardes, des motifs folkloriques caractérisent la plupart d'entre eux: la poupée du mouled, la joie des enfants jouant avec leurs cerfsvolants, etc. Sur la porte, une grande affiche du monument du soldat inconnu, son chef-d'oeuvre, son achèvement, qui fait la gloire du quartier de Madinet Nasr. La bibliothèque occupe une grande partie de la salle. Une petite cheminée avec des gravures sur verre divise la bibliothèque en deux. TV, décodeur, magnétophone, journaux, photos souvenirs, etc. Au fond de la salle, dans un coin annexé, sont rangés les romans signés par sa femme, Zeinab Sadeq, ainsi que les tomes de l'encyclopédie Agaeb al-assar fil taragem wal akhbar (Sites merveilleux à travers les journaux et les carnets de voyages).

Trois lampes et un grand lampadaire posé sur la table attribuent à la salle une lumière tamisée. "Je n'ai jamais fait du décor au sens courant", lance Sami Rafi sans hésiter à raconter une anecdote sur l'art de decoration: "Après avoir terminé mes etudes au department du décor, j'ai été nommé comme enseignant á la faculté des beaux-arts. Cela ne m'a pas empêché de travailler hors du cadre universitaire. La premiére fois qu'un client est venu me voir, il m'a demandé de m'occuper de la decoration de son appartement. Il voulait une chambre à coucher de couleur violet, même les meubles. J'ai été un peu choqué et lui ai dit d'aller plutôt voir un entrepreneur, lequel pourrait mieux répondre à ses demandes. C'était une defaite pour moi, une déception; et depuis j'ai décidé de ne plus travailler comme décorateur traditionnel sur commande".

En fait, ce genre d'art n'intéresse aucunement Rafi, qui vise à créer des liens entre l'art el le grand public. Il rêve que son décor ait une fonction sociale et qu'il soit partagé par tous, sans barrière aucune. Bref, l'art pour tous, d'ailleurs, le design qu'il a conçu pour les stations du métro (la ligne Choubra-Guiza), en sont une preuve. La peinture de chaque station est en rapport avec la vie de tous les jours et en même temps liée à l'histoire des lieux. Les murs de la station Ataba, à titre d'exemple, sont le symbole universel du théâtre puisque dans ce même quartier se trouvent le Théâtre National, le theater Al-Talia et celui des Marionnettes. De même, le décor de la station de l'Université du Caire est fait de dessins de cahiers et de livers où figure la lampe d'Aladin.

Dès sa tendre enfance, Rafi adopte en effet ce principe de l'art pour tous, sans en être vraiment conscient. Mais le concept mûrissait dans sa tête au fur et à mesure durant sa jeunesse, à l'ombre du patriotisme effervescent des années 1950. Cette manière de voir a été encouragée par toute une conjoncture sociopolitique favorable, mais trouvait ses racines dans une expérience tout à fait personnelle.

Encore enfant, et ancien élève de l'école Al-Sélehdar (dans les environs de la rue Al-Gueich), Rafi faisait chaque jour le trajet à pied entre Sakakini, où il habitait avec sa famille dans un petit appartemenmt, et son établissement scolaire. C'était une belle promenade, durant laquelle le petit dégustait l'art du Vieux-Caire. C'etait son premier contact direct avec l'art, un art qu'il trouvait dans les rues, à la portée de sa main. En outre, il y avait l'influence de son frère aîné, le peintre surréalist Samir Rafi. "C'est lui qui m'a fait découvrir l'amour de la peinture". Le hasard a joué un rôle indélébile dans la vie de Sami Rafi. "La chambre à coucher de Samir, mon frére, faisait office d'atelier. Je profitais de ses sorties avec ses amis de l'association Al-Fan al-moasser (l'Art contemporain), afin de rentrer dans la chambre et peindre, utilisant ses couleurs et ses pinceaux. Une fois, j'ai fait mon autoportrait en regardant mon visage dans le miroir. Un jour, Samir est arrivé et m'a vu avec les couleurs entre les mains. Il ne m'a pas grondé, mais il m'a présenté à ses amis qui se sont moqués de moi... Le lendemain, il m'a acheté une palette et des couleurs", raconte Sami Rafi. Le frère aîné était un bon guide, plus tard il a enseigné à son frère à la faculté des beaux-arts. Mais Sami souffrait à force de voir les oeuvres de son frère aîné prisonnières de son atelier. "Samir exposait seul ou avec ses collègues de l'association Ean al-moasser. L'exposition durait parfois une semaine ou une dizaine de jours. Il cherchait à inviter les gens ordinaires, loin des élites et des hommes de letters et des arts plastiques, car en général le public était trop limité. Une fois l'exposition terminée, la plupart des tableaux se retrouvaient à nouveau dans l'atelier et parfois même dans les autres salles de la maison". Cette expérience a bien imprégné le jeune frère, Sami, qui s'interrogeait: "Comment se fait-il qu'un artiste travaillant avec beaucoup de sincérité n'arrive pas à faire parvenir ses oeuvres au petit peuple?". Des interrogations porteuses d'un refus, celui d'une situation injuste aux yeux de Rafi et auxquelles il ne trouvera de réponse qu'apreès avoir étudié à la faculté des beaux-arts. Lors de son admission, il n'avait pas encore décidé quelle serait sa spécialisation. Durant l'année préparatoire, il étudia la gravure, la sculpture, la peinture, le décor, etc. A travers ces diverses disciplines, il cherchait à savoir comment rendre l'art utile et fonctionnel au quotidien, comment établir un lien entre les gens et l'art sans l'intermédiaire d'expositions et de grandes manifestations culturelles, lesquelles n'attirent qu'un public limité. "Je le sais, moi j'ai de la chance", dit-il avec fierté. Au cours de cette année d'étu de préparatoire, Sami et son frère Samir ont été invités à assister á L'Avare, de Molière, pièce interprétée sur les planches de l'ancien Opéra du Caire 1952. Le rôle principal était tenu par Said Abou-Bakr. "Je me souviens toujours de cette pièce, elle était un peu monotone et en arabe classique. Ce qui m'éblouissait, c'était le décor énorme, et comment on le changeait d'une scène à l'autre. J'ai beaucoup apprécié l'art du décor, un art directement apprécié par le public. C'est ce que je veux". Rafi s'en souvient avec la même joie et fierté du passé.

Devenant alors maître-assistant au départment du décor, le jeune Rafi, qui touchait 30 livres par mois, n'aimait pas la routine de l'enseignement, il aspirait à d'autres occasions lui permettant de changer le rythme de sa vie et de gagner un peu plus d'argent. Un jour, le ministère de la Culture annonce l'attribution sur concours d'une bourse pour l'Autriche afin d'étudier l'art de diriger les planches du théâtre. Rafi s'est alors présenté et a obtenu une bourse de 5 ans, où il a tout appris sur les techniques de la direction des planches et celles du décor, avec l'aide du directeur de l'Opéra de Vienne, Hans

Felkel. La première coopération entre Sami le boursier et son maître, Felkel, s'est révélée fructueuse. Ce dernier affrontait un problème concernant le design et le décore de La Flûte enchantée, notamment la scène où le protagoniste doit traverser le feu et ensuite l'eau. Une scène difficile à réaliser par le biais d'un décor traditionnel. Sami Rafi a alors proposé de recourir au verre. Il a créé une forme originale en verre, qui sous l'effet de l'éclairage ressemble beaucoup au feu embrasé ensuite à l'eau transparente. Ayant terminé ses 4 ans d'études à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Vienne, Sami Rafi Décide de prolonger son séjour d'un an pour travailler avec son maître Felkel et gagner de l'expérience pratique. De retour en Egypte, Rafi a monté le décor du livret d'Opéra "La Vie d'un artiste" en 1970, juste avant le fameux incendie de l'ancien Opéra du Caire.

Malgré les travaux multiples qu'il a achevés, l'artiste considère que le monument du soldat inconnu est son vrai et unique chef-d'oeuvre. "C'est cette oeuvre que j'adore le plus. Son histoire est vraiment drôle et c'est par pur hasard que je l'ai accomplie. C'était en 1974, je regardais le journal télévisé montrant un arc commémoratif en Iraq. Un arc fabuleux et gigantesque. C'était le monument du soldat inconnu en Iraq, aujourad'hui, peut-être, est-il complètement détruit", lance-t-il avec amertume en continuant son histoire. "J'ai éteint la télévision en me demandant pourquoi ne pas faire quelque chose de semblable en Egypte, surtout que durant la guerre on a perdu beaucoup de jeunes gens sans même parvenir à les identifier". Rafi a voulu rallier dans cette oeuvre les différentes cultures de l'Egypte. Une raison pour laquelle il a choisi de construire son monument en béton sous une forme pyramidale, avec des décorations calligraphiques représentatnt les noms les plus répandus en Egypte.

Le hasard a joué pour beaucoup dans sa vie professionnelle et il n'a pas épargné également sa vie privée. La romancière Zeinab Sadeq est son grand amour. Cela fait quinze ans qu'ils sont mariés, mais ils se connaissent depuis beaucoup plus longtemps. L'amour a pris son temps pour se révéler. "Jai demandé sa main avec la plus grande simplicité. J'étais divorcé, et je vivais seul; elle non plus n'avait pas de famille, je lui dis alors: pourquoi ne pas se marier?", dit-il sur un ton modeste et doux.

A l'âge de 60 ans, Sami Rafi a pensé regrouper ses oeuvres pour en faire une exposition. Néanmoins, il ne possédait que des photos de celles-ci. Et du coup, l'exposition n'a jamais vu le jour. "Tous mes travaux ne sont plus à moi, mais au peuple, c'est pourquoi je n'ai pas réussi à organiser cette exposition". En 2001, il publie un ouvrage, Sami Rafi wal fan al-gamahiri (Sami Rafi et l'art du peuple). Celui-ci regroupe les photos de ses oeuvres et les esquisses de son travail. Peut-être n'a-t-il jamais décoré un grand appartement ou une villa de luxe, peut-être ses décors conçus pour des spectacles divers ont-ils disparu des entrepôts de l'Opéra ou des théâra mai Sami Rafi est quand même un grand satisfait.

JALONS

1931: Naissance au Caire.

1956: Diplôme de la faculté des beaux-arts.

1962: Bourse de 5 ans en Autriche afin d'étudier le décor du theater.

1975: Monument du soldat inconnu.

1992-1997: Peintures murales de 19 stations du métro souterrain entreChoubra et Guiza.

Sami Rafi's works intended to be appreciated by both the common, elite

By Mohamed Hamza

The Egyptian Gazette 4/1/2002

According to Herbert Reed "Art is most simply and most usually defined as an attempt to create pleasing forms. Such forms satisfy our sense of beauty and the sense of beauty is satisfied when we are able to appreciate a unity or harmony of formal relations among our sense-perception."

So any artistic theory has to start from the assumption that man responds to the existing forms around him from which harmony, hence pleasure are produced. This is what Sami Rafi has put before his eyes ever since joining the faculty of Fine Arts in 1951. He wished to produce innovative shapes in a pleasing manner for all people. He was not interested in sculpture or painting, but rather preferred works that could be appreciated by all people as memorials, stamps, posters or murals. A piece that could be understood and appreciated by the common in addition to the elite.

In his elegant book which he designed about his artistic journey under the title of Sami Rafi sand Popular Art he selected photographs of the best of his works that show his creative designs.

My friendship to Rafi goes back to school days, 50 years ago, Rafi went on a five-year scholarship to Austria at the expense of the old Opera House. Rafi spent his scholarship at the Vienna Opera House where he was studying stage set. Sami's talent was always developing because of his eagerness to learn more of the art he was infatuated with and because he was member of an artistic family, his brother being the famous Samir Rafi who has been staying in Paris since the 50s.

Sami was overjoyed when as a young man, his brother, caught him using his colours and brushes and instead of reproaching him expressed admiration of his talent. Samir kept showing his friends he work of his brother boasting of his talent. Sami graduated from college in 1956 and was appointed as member of staff.

The most important of his works is the Unknown Solider Memorial that stands at Nasr City. He was inspired by the idea of the memorial from a TV programme. He kept making cardboard models of a pyramid which originally functions as a tomb bearing the meaning of immortality.

The memorial takes the shape of four sides 32 metres high. At the middle he placed a huge black granite cube as a centre of the memorial. With relief straight letters he wrote names of Egyptian martyrs on the two sides of the four surfaces. The memorial has become one of the main milestones in Cairo visited by visiting statesmen and officials.

The book includes the stage designs he created for some shows such as the operatta "The life of an Artist" by Strauss shown at the opera in 1970, "The Fire Bird" ballet by Stravinsky, "Aida" by Verdi which was directed in 1984 by Saad Ardash, the "Magic Flute" by Mozart and the opera of "Madame Butterfly" directed by Amin Fekri in 1981.

Sami Rafi also designed posters in such a way that reflected his competitive talent. He was the designer of the poster "Fountains of the Sun", a documentary directed by John Feeny about the River Nile and its sources, the posters of Cairo first and second biennials, the surrealist exhibition and the one that marked the millennium of Al Azhar in 1983.

He also engaged himself in the design of slogans which usually requires briefness, simplicity and to the point expression. Due to his special ability in this domain he was assigned with the slogans of Cairo City, the Sadat Academy, The National Bank, the Fine Artists Syndicate, Mubarak Library, the Society of Plastic Art Critics and many more.

He Also designed stamps on many occasions marking, for instance, Africa Day and the 21st anniversary of the Revolution.

As for designing book covers he has 40 designs including two children books with illustrations. He, moreover, designed a silver coin cast by the state marking the Diamond Jubilee of the Faculty of Fine Arts in 1983.

The book which Sami has recently released also includes the murals he designed for the stations of the under ground metro which includes 19 stations starting from Shubra Al Kheima to Ramsis Square and then extending from Tahrir to Giza.

Because the metro scoops about two million passengers daily Sami was keen to observe simplicity in design and subject matter. Each mural design with ceramic tiles, to secure easy cleaning, is about 100x3 metres.

At Shubra Al Kheima station he designed mural bearing the name of the station with interfering geometric shapes in yellow ochre with degrees of blue in such remarkable harmony of colours. At St. Teresa station he designed two embracing hearts denoting national unity between Islam and Chrisitianity. At Rod Al Farag station he deigned sailing boats reminding viewers of Rod Al Farag which used to be a Nile harbour At Faisal station he opted for a different inclination where he designed figures in black thick lines symbolising the (Molid doll) flanked by a troupe of Nubian folk music players.

Generally his murals at the metro statins are among the fresh creations that reflects unity, rhythm, balance and coherence, which are live artistic values looked for in any creative piece. They are not mere abstract murals but an outstanding collection that meet the eyes of millions of passengers daily.